

SAFE, THOUGH SIN-SURROUNDED

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*“Unto thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou
be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.”
Psalm 28:1*

I HAVE no doubt that the first and most natural meaning of these words is this, that David passed through such mental distress, such accumulated grief, that unless his prayer should bring him consolation from heaven, he felt that he must despair, and so become like those who sink into everlasting despair, going down into the pit of hell. I think it is a cry against his misery, which vexed him, an earnest petition that he might not have to suffer so long as to drive into that same despair which is the eternal inheritance of lost souls.

But in reading the other day Massillon's *Reflections of the Psalms*, I noticed that that eminent French preacher gives quite another turn to the passage, and he seems to regard this as being the prayer of David when he was exposed to the association of the ungodly, fearful lest he should become in character like those that go down into the pit, and even if that should not be the first meaning of the text, it seems to me to be a natural inference from it, and if not, still the thought itself is one which contains so much of holy caution about it, that I desire to commend it to all my brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus tonight, and especially to such as are usually exposed to danger from ill-society.

We will begin, then, by remarking that—

I. MANY OF THE BEST OF GOD'S SAINTS ARE CALLED IN THE ORDER OF PROVIDENCE TO BE TRIED BY EVIL COMPANIONSHIP.

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world,” said Christ, “but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Hence we are not shut up in monasteries or nunneries. We have not to—

*“Lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade.”*

We are placed in the midst of our fellow men. We are not even placed among a selected body of men, but for the most part we are thrown down in the midst of society, and in the case of some, the society which they must inevitably keep is of the very worst and most dangerous kind. I say that first of all. This is in a measure the case with all, or nearly all of us. We are placed in a world in which there is nothing that is friendly to grace, but everything that is opposed to the spiritual life. That man must be very happily circumstanced indeed who does not find himself a stranger in a strange land, and a foreigner among aliens who do not understand him.

Go out into the world at all, and you have need to put your armor on, for it is an enemy's country. There is no profession, no form of labor, no walk of life, no publicity, no retirement, in which the Christian is not in some measure exposed to the deteriorating influence of ungodly society. As long as we are in this world, it must in a measure be so.

There are few indeed who are screened from this danger, but there are some who are peculiarly exposed to it—some in the highest walks of life. It is not easy to be a Christian, and to be amongst the great. “Gold and the Gospel,” said John Bunyan very truly, “seldom agree.” The high mountains are

cold. The tops of the hills—the tempest sweeps along them. We have had mournful examples lately that the most eminent rank does not secure morality or guidance, even by the rules of commonsense.

I have been inclined lately, when I have read the papers, to interpret the term “the scum of society” to refer to those who float on the top, for certainly there is no rank of society that could have figured more abominably in the Divorce Court, no rank of society that could have exhibited itself so detestably upon the racecourse, than the peerage of this realm, and unless God mend the manners of the Right Honorables, their names will have to be Right Abominables—the term will be more suitable to them by far. It is hard, depend upon it, to be great and to be good. No man need, then, be very ambitious to climb to the high places. Brains swim when risen aloft, that had been calm enough below. Be contented where you are, and rest satisfied with Agar’s portion, who prayed, “Give me neither poverty nor riches.”

It must be hard, too, for a man to keep himself free from the contamination of company in what are called the lowest ranks. Oh! how many of you, Christian brethren, there are, the sons of toil, pure, and good, and holy men, who have tomorrow morning to go and mix with those who interlard almost every sentence with an oath. I remember it was the complaint of one of our sisters in the poor house, not that the diet was sparse, not that the bed was hard, but that the language used by those with whom she must associate vexed her soul.

Only in the lowest ranks men do not cover up their profanity. They have not learned that politeness which can blaspheme God secretly, but they speak right out their enmity, and they couch their offensive thoughts of the Most High in the most offensive words, and hence the people of God thrust into such society are like holy Lot in the midst of Sodom, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly.

Oh! dear young people, be very thankful, you that are yet nestling under the wing of parental care and have not to go into a rough and wicked world. I am afraid for some of you good young creatures to join the church, lest your piety should not stand the test of this rough world, when you must, by and by, be thrust out into it, and you, my brethren and sisters, who, through the goodness of providence are kept from being exposed to the temptations peculiar to the extremes of life, be very grateful, but as you have less to contend with in this respect, bring forth more fruit unto God, and seek to be more eminent Christians because of the advantages of your circumstances.

Yet brethren, I may as well come back to where I started. I suppose that we are all of us, in whatever way of life we may be walking, exposed more or less to the associations of those who are not the servants of Christ. What business could a man select in which he would find that all with whom he had to deal were Christians? If there were indeed a parish of All Saints, it might be a very desirable place for residence, though I hardly know whether any man would be right in going to live there, since God’s objective in making saints on earth at all is that, by casting them like salt in the midst of the earth, they may work for good and savor the mass.

You must, you must mix more or less with those who will tempt you. Do not be in a hurry, therefore, to change your position in life. If it is not, in itself, sinful—in case it is so, give it up tomorrow—but if it be not in itself sinful, stand not aghast at its peculiar temptations. There are temptations elsewhere. You may go from the frying pan into the fire, as the old proverb hath it, very readily. In getting out of one temptation, you may soon get into another, and on the whole, probably the temptation that is troubling you most is the best that you can have.

It is the temptation that would not trouble you that would be the most dangerous, and when a man’s cross has been long on his shoulder, it begins to fit him, and he had better not change it for another. In every condition it is your lot to be crying to God for help, but do not be earnest to get out of the fire. This much the first point then.

The second is this. It appears from the text that—

II. THE GREAT DANGER OF GOOD MEN IS LEST THEY SHOULD BECOME LIKE THE UNGODLY THROUGH ASSOCIATION WITH THEM.

Brethren, I shall speak very much from observation, actual observation, and I fear, also partly from personal experience, when I briefly describe the way in which association with the ungodly tends to make Christians like them.

First, it too frequently happens that *the Christian's testimony is silenced*. We always try to make excuses for not doing what it is disagreeable to do. Now it is the duty of the Christian, wherever he may be, to bear witness for his Lord, but self-love and the love of ease come in and they say, "You must not make religion offensive, you must not cast your pearls before swine, you must not bore people with your godliness." This is said to be prudent, and to a great extent it is prudent, but it is the easiest thing in all the world to think that we are prudent when we are really cowardly, and to make it out that we are using judgment when, instead thereof, we are only trying to protect ourselves from the sneers and jeers of the wicked.

It is an easy thing only to bear witness for our Lord in the midst of those who thank us for so doing, and who confirm our testimony, but to stand out for Christ before the congregation of the wicked, this is not so easy a task, and oftentimes when the good man has found himself in evil company he has been tempted, as he thinks by a due regard for prudence, not to say anything for his Lord and Master. Now, in this, you become like them that go down into the pit. They do not praise God, they are silent about Christ, they talk not of the preciousness of His blood, they speak not of His eternal and unchangeable love. You speak not either, and therein you become like they. Who shall tell the difference when both are silent?

The next stage is *when the Christian man actually does fear, though he may not think he does, the sneers of his associates*. You are like them the moment you are afraid of them, they have discovered in you a likeness to themselves the moment you tremble at them. But there are some tongues so foul, some whose wit is so sharp, whose remarks are so sarcastic, that it is not to be quite marveled at that Christians are afraid to be thorough Christians in their presence.

And yet, my brethren, what is there to be afraid of in the greatest man that ever breathed? What is there in our holy Christianity that we wish to cover up, to conceal, in the presence of the most skeptical, the most witty, the most severe of the sons of men? Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of man, and the son of man that is but as a moth or a worm? Thy Lord has given thee in charge His precious truth, and to live out that truth in thine own proper character, and wilt thou for fear of a feeble man hide, and conceal, and cover up with a bushel the light thy God has given you? Ah! then this is indeed to become like them, for they that fear man more than God make man their god, and what is this but to be idolatrous and to be godless? God deliver us from this!

Another tendency will next crop up, and that is *the inclination in Christian people to just yield a point or two*. We are told that we must not be too precise and severe. Have I not often heard words like these, "If we exhibit too much of the Puritanism of religion, we shall probably disgust those with whom we associate, and more especially youthful minds will be repelled by the severity of our piety"?

Oh! I could laugh, if I did not weep, when I hear men talk so, for to tell me that in this age there is any fear of any man being too severely Puritanical is to assert the thing that is not. It is a lax age. Their tacklings are loosed, the old landmarks are pulled up. Principles—why, what do men care for principles nowadays? There is no fear of being too tight and too precise, and if it were not so in this age, yet since we serve a jealous God we need never be afraid that we can be too jealous of our own hearts.

George the Third in his older days did some very curious things, and very frequently, made them think him insane, but there was a kind of method in all his madness. One day he met a Quaker gentleman, and accosted him, and was introduced to his wife. George said, "And are you one of the Society of Friends, madam?" She said she was. "Isn't there a little too much lace there?" he said, putting his hand on some portion of her dress. She said, "Well, I have a little deviated from strictness, I am sorry to say." "And I am sorry to see it, madam," he said, "for when people once get away from their strictness they generally go a very long way from it," and there is very great truth in that.

Albeit I am not speaking now about dress, but merely quote it as an instance, still, it is so, that when Christian people tolerate a little sin they will tolerate a great sin, and when they give up some little point of virtue they will give up some great point. “No,” says the thief, “I do not mean to break open that door, no, I do not mean to try and force my way into that house.” There is a little window, just a little window there, and here is a very little boy, and you mean to put him in? “Yes,” and when that little boy is in, he opens the big door, and the burglar enters.

And it is so with the church of God. Some little sin, as men will have it, some little deflection from the rigid line of right is tolerated, and then the door is open, and all manner of mischief cometh in thereby. God grant that we may not, by giving way here and there, pull down the bulwarks of our church, and so make the children of God to become like those that go down into the pit.

There is a point, my brethren, I would bring before you in which oftentime, I am afraid, Christians become like ungodly men, and that is in joining in a laugh over a jest which almost compels laughter, but which is not altogether clean. George Herbert tells us that in a jest we should take the wit, and leave out that which is evil, for—

“He pares his apple that would cleanly feed,”

but it is not always easy to pare the apple just at the time. When a Christian in company is seen to laugh over a doubtful jest, he has committed himself far farther than he thinks. It were much better if he drew himself up, and said, “I could laugh with you at what little wit may sparkle in that quotation, but I cannot endorse the sentiment with which it is accompanied, nor suffer it to pass without entering my protest against.” Do we always do so? I am afraid that almost always we neglect the doing of that, and in that respect we become like those that go down into the pit.

Ah! brethren, how easy it is for us to fall by little and a little into the ways of the ungodly, to get to do as they do, and talk as they talk, and act as they act, and though on Sabbath day we take a different rule, yet on the weekday how much is the life of the professed Christian like that of the ungodly? I am not here to impeach the common Christianity of the age, but if I were, what an impeachment might be brought against it! It is, alas! too true that many a tradesman who is a professing Christian is no more to be trusted than his infidel neighbor, that the Christian merchant is not proof against the injurious influence of the custom of his trade.

We have had good men, whom God forbid that we should censure too severely, who ought to have stood out against the methods of mercantile finance in years gone by, but who fell into the custom of the rest, and therefore, the world can scarcely condemn them, but from the judgment of the Christian teacher they cannot go unscathed. They ought to have known, and to have done better. It is no excuse for a Christian that it was the custom of the business. He has no right to make himself the slave of men, nor yield to custom.

Follower of Christ, independence of mind in carrying out integrity of purpose is that which you are bound to exhibit, and which the Holy Spirit will help you to achieve. May the day come when it shall not be our sorrowful task to have to utter such sentiments, but we are obliged to utter them now, and we beg believers here to put up the prayer, and pray tonight that God would let His voice be heard in your hearts, lest you should become like them that go down into the pit.

Brethren, just one moment here. There is nothing more horrible that I know of than that a man who professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ should defile himself as others do. What a dishonor to that dear name before which the angels bow, that we who wear it should act as Christ’s enemies do. Paul saith, “I tell you, even weeping, that there are some that are the enemies of the cross of Christ, for their god is their belly; their end is destruction; they glory in their shame”—and these were professors! Nothing can be worse for the church, nothing more disastrous to the world, than for Christians to become like the unconverted.

The flood came upon the earth when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men. The day of chastisement is always near the day of sin, and the day when the godly assimilate with

the Christless will be the prelude of the great overwhelming flood of fire that shall sweep away the earth. Do let us, if we would bless our age, be firm for the right and for the truth. If we would be happy ourselves, if we would honor and glorify Christ, let our prayer constantly be that we may not be as the wicked are.

But I must not tarry longer, for I have to notice, in concluding—

III. THE REMEDY TO WHICH DAVID RESORTED AGAINST THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY WHICH HE FELT.

David was a great deal better man than we might have expected him to be in the position he occupied. When you hear persons condemn the glaring fall of David, you may join in their condemnation, but you may also ask them to remember the remarkable circumstances in which David was found. The sin which David committed, great and grievous as it was, was all too common—what if I say *is* all too common?—in a soldier's life.

The first part of David's life he spent as a captain of free-booters. That word does not quite describe his band, for they were not lawless robbers, but they were men, we are told, who were discontented, and who fled from regular government, and we know from their character and conduct that they were rough, unbridled soldiery, who would never have been governed by anyone less strong in character than David. Now associations like these he must often have felt to be extremely dangerous to his spirit.

Notice, then, what this practical Christian used as his remedy. *It was prayer*—prayer with an earnest cry. He felt as if he were slipping, and he cried, "Lord, grasp me, hold me, arrest the sliding of these feet." It was a cry such as a child uses when it is lost, and it cries for its mother, a piteous cry of sorrow, of fear, of alarm. "My God, my Father," he seems to say, "I beseech Thee interpose, I slide, I fall, the precipice is beneath me, the ungodly seek to thrust me over it, come to my rescue, my God, make haste and come to my rescue now."

Now, if David used prayer, I will confirm that by reminding you of David's Master. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth He had many temptations to sin. His heart was not, like yours and mine, a tinderbox to catch every spark of temptation, but yet even He could not live here without much prayer. I say not that He could have sinned, but I do say that His holy nature seemed instinctively to understand that it must use prayer, that it must use much prayer in order to constantly cast off the temptations of the world. Cold mountains, therefore, and the midnight air continually witnessed to the intercessions and pleadings of Christ when He held communion with His God.

I shall not need, I think, to spend even a moment in making the personal application, and yet I will do so, after all, on second thoughts. If there be a working man here who is called to work with many men who are drunkards and blasphemers, let him take this word of advice tonight—pray twice as much as if you worked with the godly. If there is a young woman here placed in peculiar circumstances of temptation, let me say—keep up your communion with God with greater earnestness than if you were living at home with Christian parents. Pray more, pray more intently. Live nearer to God in communion.

When a man is sick of some disease that takes away his strength, the physician urges him to take a more liberal diet. So with you. Live better now that there are greater drains upon your spiritual constitution, if you do not do so you will be sore sick, but if you maintain this, you will be kept above the evil.

But I need your attention, in closing, to the last thought suggested by the text. The objective of David's prayer was that he might hear the voice of God in his soul, "lest," says he, "if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down to the pit."

IV. WHAT, THEN, WAS THIS VOICE OF GOD WHICH DAVID DESIRED TO HEAR?

Let me guess at it for a minute. Was it not, first, *that voice which would awaken sacred memories*? You have been exposed to temptation, my brethren, and you are ready to yield, but a voice reminds you of the day of your first espousals when your heart was warm towards Christ, of the days of your baptism, when you were buried with Christ, professing to be dead to the world.

It reminds you of the solemn vows that you made in years gone by, of solemn declarations that were registered before high heaven that you would be firm and faithful and keep covenant with God. What, thou, thou, thou—wilt thou sin? A member of a Christian church, one whose head has been leaning on Christ's bosom, one who has heard His voice, and rejoiced in it—canst thou, canst thou turn aside?

Perhaps you have an invitation for tomorrow, canst thou accept it when it involves sin? It may be that this very night thou wouldest have fallen, but by the recollection of those holy and happy seasons that thou hast had at the Lord's table, those times of private prayer, those hours when it was well with thee, and thou didst walk with God, the still small voice of God calls to thee, "What doest thou here, Elijah? Servant of God, what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Turn aside from the ways of sin and seek thee unto thy God."

That voice would do something more, however, than startle the recollections of memory, *it was intended to infuse vigor and courage*. Sometimes a captain's voice has been known to win a battle, when the ranks are beginning to waver, when the pikes of the enemy are pushing forward. Here he comes—the gallant captain, always first in every charge. "'Tis he, 'tis he!" they say, and he comes to the front and cries, "Will you fly before them? Will you play the coward? Standard-bearer, unfurl the banner and advance!" and at that word, so full of fire, and force, and energy, the enemy is made to quail, and on they dash, and the victory is won.

My God, let me hear Thy voice within my soul just after that sort. When I shall begin to run before my spiritual foes, when association with them has almost overthrown me, let me hear the voice of Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and my leader's voice as it calls me on shall re-animate my spirit that I may win the day.

The voice of God, moreover, may be regarded as *that which actually impels the soul*. "Let there be light," said God, and light flitted through the darkness. God's voice creates, upholds, strengthens, perfects, and when God's voice comes into the heart of a sinking Christian, when that Christian thinks, "It is no use standing out any longer, I may as well give it up, and become as others are," then if that voice comes, it speaks to the heart, and it throbs healthily; it speaks to the judgment, and it puts no longer bitter for sweet; it speaks to the will, and the will becomes firm for the right and for the truth. God's voice, that breaks the rocks and splits the cedars of Lebanon, inspirits and encourages the heart of the believer. Put up your prayer, then, tonight, you that are much tried and tempted, "Lord, let me hear Thy voice, let me hear it every morning before I go into the world."

Beloved, never look man in the face till you have seen the face of God. Oh! lock up your hearts every morning by prayer, and give God the key, so that no evil may get in while you are out of doors. Oh! you do not know how some members of this church grieve us by their inconsistency. I would sooner bury you than that you should sin so as to grieve God's Spirit and cause the enemy to blaspheme. The Lord has kept many, many of you with garments white and unspotted, but if you want our hearts to break, profess to be Christians, and then go into sin. May the Lord keep you, my beloved, keep you fast and firm amidst this crooked and perverse generation.

You young people, you young men and women, may the Lord grant that none of you may ever turn your backs in the day of battle! And you old people—the greatest pain we have ever had has been brought to this church not by young people, but by old people. It is the old fools that are the biggest fools when they are fools. When old people are wise, they are the wisest, but when they are foolish, they are the most foolish. God keep the aged, and preserve their reverend heads, that they may not disgrace them, but may be a crown of glory to them. The Lord keep the pastors, keep the elders, be with you all, and keep you all pure and unspotted from the world! This is our prayer and desire. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DANIEL 6

Chapter 6. Verses 1-3. *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

Kings are never satisfied. The empire of Darius was always growing, and a chapter or two farther on we find that he had a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. There is no end to the greediness of man, and what does he get by it after all? One pair of hands can only do one man's work, he only gains more toils, and he has now to distribute the cares of his State among others. Then how good it is for any man when he is guided to a right, honest, and hearty helper! Such was the lot of Darius.

How advantageous, too, it may be for the people of God when a man like Daniel is put in the high places of the land! Doubtless he was exalted, not only for his own sake, but that he might be as a brazen shield and bulwark for the people of God in that foreign land. No extortions would now be committed on the Jewish race, for they had a friend at court. Blessed be God, we have a friend at court too, one who will take up our cause, and speak for us to the King of kings.

4. *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault;*

Who can stand before envy? High places furnish very uncomfortable seats, for even if God exalt a man, men will try to pull him down, but he is an honorable man indeed who puts his enemies to their shifts before they can find anything against him.

4-7. *Forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.*

We do not know with what ingenious arguments they moved the king's mind to pass this, but we think we can conceive them. He had just conquered Chaldea, they would, therefore, say, "It will be an excellent test of the obedience of your new subjects if you touch them upon the point of their religion, try whether they will for thirty days abstain from addressing their deities."

Perhaps, too, since Darius had a colleague on the throne, the younger Cyrus, who was much more popular than he, they may have egged him on by hinting that Cyrus was much too vain, and that, therefore, if he would not allow anyone to address a petition, even to Cyrus, for thirty days, it would tend to show who was really loyal to Darius, and would also test the temper of Cyrus. I cannot tell how they did it, but somehow or other they managed to lead the foolish old man to carry out their designs.

8. *Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.*

The Babylonians entrusted their king with absolute power, hence he could will this or that as he chose. The Persians believed their kings to be possessed of perfect wisdom, and hence they never allowed a law to be changed, for that would be to suppose that the king who made it had made a mistake, a thing which could by no possibility ever occur.

There is an amusing instance given by a modern traveler, who tells us that a few years ago one of the later Persian kings said he would never remove from his tent in the plain until the snow had gone from some mountains to which he pointed. It happened to be a very late summer, and the snow was long in melting, and his gracious majesty had to keep his place in his tent, while his troops were perishing with fever in a low marsh district, until they procured men to sweep the snow from the tops of the mountains in order that he might be able to move.

It is inconvenient for men to play the God, they cannot do it without bringing serious difficulty and danger upon themselves. So did Darius on this occasion. I never like men who, when they speak a hasty word, say they cannot alter it. Rash vows are better broken than kept, you had no right to say you would do the thing, much less have you any right to do it when you have said you would do it. However, the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered.

9-10. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house;

That is right, the less we have to do with man, and the more we have to do with God the better, he did not go to the king to complain, but he went into his house to tell his God about it.

10. And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem,—

That much-loved city, though now in ruins.

10. He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

'Twas bravely done. A man in a meaner position might have carried out his devotions in private without sin, but not so Daniel. He is a representative man, he must not play the coward, it is incumbent upon him to be more especially and deliberately public in all that he does, for if he be seen to slink in never so small a degree, then all the saints will lose heart.

11-13. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel,—

Here is impudence! But they called Jesus Christ “this Fellow.” Why, Daniel was the chief of the presidents, the prime minister of the king, and yet they say, “That Daniel.” Ill-hearts generally have ill-mouths, and what can you expect but ill-words out of ill-mouths?

13. That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah,—

That captive, that slave, that serf—so they seemed to put it, forgetting that he was their master by virtue of his high office.

13-14. Regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself,—

There was a little conscience left. Calvin does not like the man at all. He says, What right had he to sign a decree hastily, which might take away the lives of the best men in his dominion? And his repentance does not seem to be a repentance of the act, but only of the consequences.

14. And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Here was a great king, made himself out to be a god, and yet he cannot have his own way. When that famous potter, who was a true Christian, was brought before the king, the king said to him, “Unless you change your views, I shall be compelled to have you burned.” “Ah!” said Bernard de Palissy, “you are a king, and yet say, ‘I shall be compelled,’ and I am a poor potter, but no man can make me use those words, I will be compelled to do nothing against my conscience.”

Oh! the holy bravery of men who are saved! When Bonner had one of the martyrs before him, he said, “I will convince you, a blazing faggot will convince you.” “A fig for your faggot,” said the man, “or a wagon-load of them, I can stand and burn better than you can wear your miter.” So the saints of God are strong, and can bid defiance to the adversary through divine grace.

15. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

This is the reason of his deliverance, not his innocency, but his faith, we are told by Paul that it was faith that shut the mouths of lions.

16-24. *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou serve continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serve continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives;*

Which was a piece of injustice, the throwing in of their wives and children, though we cannot say as much of the throwing of them in.

24. *And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

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